

**CITY OF SAINT PAUL  
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT**

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FILE NAME: 882 West Seventh Street  
DATE OF APPLICATION: February 25, 2016 (additional materials submitted on March 3, 2016)  
APPLICANT: West 7<sup>th</sup>/Fort Road Federation, Ed Johnson  
OWNER: same  
DATE OF HEARING: March 24, 2016  
HPC SITE/DISTRICT: Jacob Schmidt Brewing Company Historic District (POS 1858—1955)  
CATEGORY: Contributing  
CLASSIFICATION: Sign Permit  
STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Amy Spong  
DATE: March 15, 2016

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**A. SITE DESCRIPTION:**

The historic district encompasses fifty-four (54) acres of land in an area of mixed residential, commercial, and light industrial use. Extant buildings and structures historically involved in beer production and packaging are confined to the south side of West 7th Street. Aside from the four main (4) freestanding complexes south of West 7th Street, there are four (4) other contributing structures south of West 7th Street that include, a concrete retaining wall and iron fence connected to the bottling complex, a detached well house, an **advertising billboard**, and several railroad track spurs.

The irregular shape of the blocks on either side of West 7th Street adds prominence to the gateways, the east gateway announced by a small green space on either side and the **billboard** on the south and the west gateway formed by a small park on the side of the Keg House. The absence of other signage or other forms of urban clutter along the street draws attention to the historic properties themselves.

The double billboard, known as the **Billboard and Bottle Structure**, on the northeast corner of the historic brewery property has two facets, one mounted on an E-W axis and the other running parallel to West 7<sup>th</sup> Street. Connecting them is a hollow 3-dimentional image of a beer bottle. The product posting, as shown in the photos, was for both Schmidt beer and Grain Belt beer, an old Minneapolis brand that Heileman also owned. The billboard's original construction date is unknown. A photo taken from a nearby house shows the back of a billboard structure and the photo is dated August, 1955. A second but undated photo from the same nearby property also shows a billboard structure and the photo is likely 1953 or 1954, just within the period of significance.

**B. PROPOSED CHANGES:**

The applicant proposes to lease both sign faces to businesses that occupy space in the buildings and properties owned by the Federation. Each sign face has 626.5 square feet for a total of 1,252.5 square feet. A permanent sign proposal is not being proposed as the content of the signs will change depending on the businesses leasing the spaces. For the near future, the Federation intends to lease the sign spaces for the GermanFest event in May and June of 2016 and the remainder of the year; the Federation will lease the sign to Schell's Brewery. This proposal will also require a variance of the City's zoning code to allow for greater square footage of advertising than what is allowed for this property. The variance request will be for 895 SF.

The proposed sign material is polyethylene and the applicant states that paper poster sign material is no longer preferred because the new material is fully recyclable, lighter, longer lasting and easier to install (see attached article from [www.greenbiz.com/news/2009/03/23/billboards](http://www.greenbiz.com/news/2009/03/23/billboards)). The article states that polyethylene also costs more than paper. Originally, the billboards would have had paper pasted onto the sign faces but would not wrap around the sign face. The application did not include a method of attachment for the proposed signs but submitted a photo

showing a grommet with a fastener. During the designation process, no photos of the front of the Billboard and Bottle Structure were found that dated during the District's period of significance, only from behind the structure. It is unclear if the sign faces are original or if they have been replaced at some time. The application does not include a scope of work for any repair or general maintenance of the structure or restoring/conserving the beer bottle. The application does not include any lighting of the signs.

**C. GUIDELINE CITATIONS:**

**Sec. 74.08. - Jacob Schmidt Brewing Company preservation program.**

*(b) Outline of preservation program. The preservation program for the Jacob Schmidt Brewing Company Historic District shall be as follows:*

*(1) General intent. The city, a certified local government in the National Historic Preservation Program, has agreed to conduct its design review of locally designated heritage preservation sites and districts according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (1995). The standards are applied to projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility. The ten (10) standards are:*

- a. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.*
- b. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*
- c. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.*
- d. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.*
- e. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.*
- f. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*
- g. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.*
- h. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.*
- i. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*
- j. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in*

*such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*

**(3) General character.**

**a. Landscape, streetscape, and site.**

*The close relationship of the brewery to the Omaha Road is everywhere evident on the brewery site, particularly in the tracks imbedded on Oneida and swinging over to the Malt Elevator and the Keg House. These are a constitutive part of the site hardscape, just as the size and proportions of the Keg House doors are witness to their use to load rail cars.*

*The irregular shape of the blocks on either side of West 7th Street adds prominence to the gateways, the east gateway announced by a small green space on either side and the billboard on the south and the west gateway formed by a small park on the side of the Keg House. The absence of other signage or other forms of urban clutter along the street draws attention to the historic properties themselves.*

**(5) Signage, awnings and accessories.**

*a. General. Existing historic signs that reflect the development of the district should be preserved. These signs may be in the form of painted signs on buildings, surface mounted or projecting signs. Signs should be compatible with the character of the district and blend with the character of the structures on or near which they are placed. Signs should not conceal architectural detail, clutter the building's image, or distract from the unity of the facade but, rather, should complement the overall design. Signs, graphics and lighting should be designed as part of the facade. Signs on large structures that house several businesses should be planned and designed in a way that unifies the facade, while providing identity for individual businesses. A master plan for signage is encouraged.*

*b. Materials. Sign materials should complement the materials of the related building and/or the adjacent buildings. Surface design elements should not detract from or conflict with the related structure's age and design in terms of identification symbol (logo), lettering, and related patterns or pictures. Materials used should be the same as those used for signs during the period of the building's construction, such as wood, wrought iron, steel, and metal grill work. Newer materials such as extruded aluminum and plastics may not be appropriate.*

*c. Types. The sign type should enhance the building's design and materials. There are a number of types of signs which may be used: (1) single-faced; (2) projecting, double-faced; (3) three-dimensional; (4) painted wall signs; and (5) temporary signs.*

*d. Location and method of attachment. Signs should be appropriately sized and complement the building exterior; roof-top signs are inappropriate except in cases where physical or pictorial documentation shows they were present and reconstruction is considered appropriate. There should be no sign above the cornice line or uppermost portion of a facade wall. The current "landmark" sign attached to the covered walkway/conveyor belt that connects the grain silos and the Main Brewery Complex was installed outside the period of significance and is not considered a contributing element. However, there is historical evidence that a "Schmidt" sign was present in that location during the district's period of significance. Any new sign proposed for that location shall comply with applicable guidelines and should reflect the Brewery's establishment within the Fort Road neighborhood. Signs should not disfigure or conceal architectural details. Painted signs may be permissible on glass windows and doors. The facade should not be damaged in sign application, except for mere attachment. The method of attachment should respect the structure's*

*architectural integrity and should become an extension of the architecture. Projecting signs should have a space separating them from the building. (Protection of architecture in method of attachment shall be regarded as a basis for granting variance of the normal zoning code prohibition against guy wire supports for projecting signs.)*

e. *Illumination. Signs should generally be lit from on the site. There should be no flashing, blinking, moving, or varying intensity lighting. Subdued lighting is preferred. Backlit fluorescent or exposed neon are generally inappropriate.*

#### D. FINDINGS:

1. On May 25, 2011, the **Jacob Schmidt Brewing Company Heritage Preservation District** was established under Council Ord. No. 11-46 and Chapter 73 of the Legislative Code states the Heritage Preservation Commission shall protect the architectural character of heritage preservation sites through review and approval or denial of applications for city permits for exterior work within designated heritage preservation sites §73.04.(4).
2. The period of significance for the Schmidt Historic District is 1858 to 1955. The **Billboard and Bottle Structure** is located within the Jacob Schmidt Brewing Company Heritage Preservation District and is categorized as contributing to the District. This District has also been certified by the National Park Service as meeting the criteria for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The Structure is significant as it reflects the history of the Schmidt Brewery and its development and was originally used to advertise the beer labels that were made at the brewery; the structure, especially the center beer bottle is an indicator of the Brewery's historic use and signmaker's art; and, the Structure is a recognized and popular focal point in the West Seventh Street neighborhood.
3. This application only includes installation of two signs and does not include any repair/maintenance of the sign structure or any restoration/conservation of the beer bottle structure. Any future proposals will require a separate application and review by the HPC. **74.08(b)(1)(a)**
4. The adopted guidelines and Standard 1 of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation state *A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.* The Billboard Structure is proposed to be used for its historic purpose which is advertising for the Brewery site. Originally, the Billboard Structure advertised beer labels. The original signs are no longer present which allows for new businesses on site to use the same location as the original signs without destroying essential features.
5. **74.08(b)(3)(a) General Character.** The irregular shape of the blocks on either side of West 7<sup>th</sup> Street adds prominence to the gateways and *the east gateway is announced by a small green space on either side and the billboard on the south.* The guideline states that the absence of other signage or other forms of urban clutter along the street draws attention to the historic properties themselves.
6. **74.08(b)(5)(a) General.** States: *Existing historic signs that reflect the development of the district should be preserved. Signs should be compatible with the character of the district and blend with the character of the structures on or near which they are placed.* The billboard structure is historic but the original or early signs no longer exist. The NPS Preservation Brief #25 also provides more specific direction for reusing historic signs. The Brief encourages preserving historic signs and even reusing them.

Staff was unable to locate photos of the front of the Billboard Structure during the

District's period of significance. The earliest photo available from the Minnesota Historical Society is from 1979 and it shows the billboard faces to be of a similar size then what is present now. Staff was unable to determine whether the sign faces were originally constructed with a frame around the sign faces as other billboards from this era may have.

The guidelines state: *Signs on large structures that house several businesses should be planned and designed in a way that unifies the facade, while providing identity for individual businesses.* This structure is located on the parking lot that will serve the redeveloped Office Building and Rathskeller. The redevelopment plans include the potential for multiple tenants however; there is currently no master sign plan as required by the City's zoning code and as recommended in the adopted Historic District guidelines. The applicant proposes to use each sign face for a single tenant or event and the zoning code will require the signs are only used for "on premise" advertising. A zoning variance is also required for allowable square footage.

7. **74.08(b)(5)(b) Materials.** The guideline states that sign materials should complement the materials of the related building (structure) and/or adjacent buildings. The proposed polyethylene material, a common plastic, is not compatible with the historic character of the Billboard Structure, adjacent buildings or the District. Traditionally, poster paper would have been adhered to the billboard faces and the paper would have had a matte finish (not shiny). Polyethylene (plastic) would not be appropriate for permanent installation on the Structure unless it can be made and installed in a way to convey the character of paper signs from the 1950's.
8. **74.08(b)(5)(c) Types.** A single-faced sign type is appropriate since that is historically what was installed.
9. **74.08(b)(5)(d) Location and Method of Attachment.** The proposal to wrap the sign face with the plastic and then use fasteners along the bottom and back of the sign face, does not comply with the guideline that states *The method of attachment should respect the structure's architectural integrity and should become an extension of the architecture.* The guidelines also state that signs should be *appropriately sized* and while the proposal is to use the same sign size as constructed, the large size and location at grade versus, being higher up or on a rooftop, may *clutter the building's (structures) image, or distract from the unity of the façade.* It may also negatively impact the east gateway of the Schmidt Brewery Historic District.
10. **74.08(b)(5)(e) Illumination.** There is no lighting proposed for the signs or structure as part of this application.
11. The proposal to reuse the historic **Billboard and Bottle Structure** as it was historically used is supported generally by the adopted Program for Preservation and architectural control for the Jacob Schmidt Brewing Company Heritage Preservation District (Leg. Code §73.06 (e)). The proposed plastic material, method of attachment with fasteners and stretching/wrapping the sign face, and the potential large size of the advertisement will have an adverse impact on the Program for Preservation and architectural control for the Jacob Schmidt Brewing Company Heritage Preservation District (Leg. Code §73.06 (e)). The recommended conditions will allow for the structure to be used as it was used historically, but will also maintain the historic character and architectural integrity of the structure by still allowing for new uses to be recognized and advertised on site.

**E. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Based on the findings, staff recommends approval of city permits provided the following conditions are met:

1. All signs installed on these two billboard faces, from the adopted date of the HPC Resolution shall:
  - A. Be a pasted paper material (a matte fabric or plastic material may be allowed but only if it can be installed without wrapping/stretching the sign around the edges and over the bottom wood paneling.)
  - B. No visible fasteners or grommets shall be used on the sign face or wrapped around the edges. A concealed fastener or track system may be acceptable that remains permanently as the sign faces change.
  - C. All graphics, advertising, text, logos or art shall not exceed more than 70% of the existing total sign face, but the sign shall be sized to extend to the edges of the existing billboards.
2. HPC staff shall review a final sign proposal to verify the above conditions are met. As long as future signs installed meet all the above requirements, the HPC will not require individual applications each time the signs are changed.
3. This approval does not include restoration/conservation of the bottle structure or repair/maintenance on the billboard structure. Any additional work will require a separate application and review by the HPC. Any needed repairs and maintenance of the structure is encouraged.
4. An HPC decision is good for one year if no permit has been issued.
5. This approval does not obviate the need for required HPC review and approval for any future applications for additional signage, either temporary or permanent, at the property. This approval is also contingent on any needed Board of Zoning Appeals review and approval of required variances.
6. Any revisions to the approved plans shall be reviewed and approved by the HPC and/or staff.

**G. ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Application and materials dated February 25 and March 3, 2016
2. Two articles on history of billboards
3. National Park Service Preservation Brief #25: The Preservation of Historic Signs